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SERMON

Preach'd before the

Sons of the Clergy.

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A
Charity-Sermon,

FOR THE
Relief of poor Widows,

AND
Children of Clergymen,

WITHIN
The Diocese of *DURHAM*:

P R E A C H E D

Before the Sons of the Clergy
at their Anniversary Meeting in
St. Nicholas Church in Newcastle
upon Tyne, Sept. 7. 1721.

Published at the Request of the Society.

T O R K :

Printed by *Charles Bourne* for *Francis Hildyard*,
and are to be Sold by *Mr. William Taylor* in
Pater-Noster-Row, LONDON.

To the Reverend

Mr. Ambrose Fenwick }

AND

Mr. George Foster }

Stewards for
the late Feast.

AND

To the Rest of the Society of

Clergy-Sons

Who met at *Newcastle upon Tyne*,
Sept. 7th, 1721.

THIS DISCOURSE

Preached and Published

AT

Their Desire

Is most humbly Dedicated

By Their Faithful
and

Affectionate Brother
and

Obedient Servant



THO. SHARP.



Deut. 14. v. 28, 29.

At the end of three Years thou shalt bring forth all the Tythe of thine Increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy Gates.

And the Levite (because he hath no Part nor Inheritance with thee) and the Stranger, and the Fatherless, and the Widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

Among the many wise and excellent Provisions that God made for the poor, in that Constitution and Politie, which was wholly of his own ordering, and establishing, the Institution

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* Exod. 23. 10.
Lev. 25.
Deut. 15. 1.
and 9.

contained in the Text was one of the most considerable. Whereby He obliged the Israelites, once in *three years*, or rather ^a on every *third year after the year of Release*, to set out a certain Proportion of the Product of their Lands, for the use of such Persons, as had no certain Possessions among them. For there is no doubt, (though only four sorts of Persons are mentioned in the Text) but that all the poor of the Land are included under these Names; and were all to partake of the Benefit of this Law, or Custom. Hence it was usually called by the Jews † *the poor man's Tithe*: and likewise the ^b *Consummation* or *finishing of Tithes*: because their Charity, or Love of their Neighbour, was most of all conspicuous in this triennial Decimation of their Increase.

^b Deut. 26. 12.
and Grotius
on the place.

† Mischna. in Tractatu de re dubia. cap. 4.
Propterea hæc decima dicebatur — *decima pauperis*.
Scalig. in Deut. 26. 13.

Et quia pauperibus hæc etiam cedebant *Ptochodecata*
Sic Hieronymo sunt. Amama, ap. Crit. Sac.

It

It is indeed something doubtful, whether this Tithe (as to the Matter of it) was really distinct from *that* which is commanded, at the ^{c and ch. 12.} 22d verse of this Chapter, to be ^{5, 6, 7. & ver. 17, 18.} separated for Religious uses, and ^{V. 23. 25. 26.} to be spent in Joy and Gladness at God's House. Some are of Opinion * that it was not a distinct Tithing; but the Israelites were in the third year to spend *that* upon the poor of their respective Cities, which in other years they were to lay out in holy Entertainments at God's dwelling place. But the account that others || give of this Matter is as follows. That the first Tenth of Increase was to be given yearly to the *Levites*: That, out of the nine remaining parts, another Tenth was to be taken, to be expended yearly in sacred Feasting,

* Bp. Kidder. and Ainsworth on Deut. 14. 22. and Mr. Selden's Hist. of Tithes, ch. 2. Sect. 3.

|| St. August. Quest. 20. lib. 5. in Deut. and Montagu's Diatr. on the Hist. of Tithes. and Bp. Patrick on Deut. 14. 22.

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at the place of God's Residence, or Sanctuary: and that moreover *every third year*, after the Levitical and Festival Tithes were paid, *another tenth portion* was to be taken out of the remaining Product of the said year, and distributed at home, amongst those of the neighbourhood who were most in Want.

And this they suppose to be the reason why it is called *in the Book of Tobit*, and † elsewhere, *the third Tithe*: Not because it was paid every third year, but because it was a third Tithing of the Increase.

It may likewise bear some Dispute, after what manner this was to be laid out upon the poorer sort of People; whether to be consumed in feasting, as the second Tithe was, in which *the owners of the decimated increase partook with their*

Chap. i. 8.
† Josephus
Antiquities.
Book 4. ch. 8.
sect. the 22d.

Verf. 26. and
ch. 12 v. 7. & 18.

† The Words of *Josephus* referred to in the Margin are remarkable viz Besides the two Tenths commanded to be separated yearly, the One for the Levites, and the Other for Feasting, *let a third Tenth* moreover be brought forth *every third Year* to be distributed for a Supply of the Wants of Widows & fatherless Children.

fami-

families; Or whether it was to be wholly divided among the Persons named, The Levite, the Stranger, the Fatherless, and the Widow; Or whether any part of it was to be reserved as a common Fund for the Relief of such Persons, as their Necessities required. If we may conjecture from some Intimations in the Text, part of it was to be expended in publick Entertainments; for the poor were *to come, and to eat till they were satisfied*; and ^b the Levite, a constant Guest at all sacred Feasts, *was to come also*: ^{b Ch. 12. 12, 18, 19. & ch. 16. 14.} And the remaining part to be kept in store, for the Entertainment and Benefit of the said Persons, as there should be occasion afterwards; for you observe the Israelites were commanded to bring forth their Tithe, and to *lay it up within their Gates*.

But, however, as this Ordinance concerns us no further, than as it may serve to direct our Charity, both with regard to the Objects,
and

and the Proportions of it, it would be needless to enquire into the particular manner in which the Jews observed it. Whether it was the second, or a third Tithe, that they bestowed at such Seasons; Whether they made it *a Feast* or *a Fund of Charity*, or *Both*; yet it is, in any of these senses, applicable to the Design upon which we are now met together: As shewing, that it is the Will of God, *that* all men, *in their turns*, should rejoice in the Blessings of Providence; *That* they should be assisting to each other *in the measure* God hath enabled them to be so; *That* it is highly acceptable to him, that, *at certain stated times*, they should contribute, in Proportion to their Increase, and the good things they enjoy, to the Supply and Comfort of such necessitous Persons as live among them; *such especially* whose Conditions do most resemble those of the *Levite, the Stranger, the Fatherless and the*

the Widow; and *that His Blessing* may ordinarily be expected to follow upon such charitable Works.

And I am persuaded you will further discern the propriety of my application of the Text to this Occasion, when you shall have heard what Correspondence of necessities, and Relation of other Circumstances there are, between the *Persons* named to be partakers of the kindness and bounty of the Israelites, and the *Objects* of this Day's Charity, now recommended to be partakers of yours.

The first mentioned by Name in the Text is the *Levite*; Any one of that Tribe which was consecrated to God, and devoted wholly to Divine Services. Among the Jews *the whole House of Levi was separated to sacred offices*: And no Portion in the Land of Promise was allotted them for their Inheritance; because being obliged to attend upon God, and to be employed in Religious

Num. i. 47.
and 18. 2.

Num. 18. 21.

Chap. 12. 19.

vers. 27.

Deut. 10. 9.

12. 12.

18. 2.

Josh. 13. 14.

ligious Matters, they were not at leisure to cultivate the Earth, and to provide for themselves and their Families, as their other Brethren did. And therefore God made Provision for them out of the Possessions, and yearly Increase of the other Eleven Tribes. We meet with repeated Cautions to the Israelites, in this Book of *Deuteronomy*, that they should not be forgetful of the Sons of Levi. *Take heed to thy self, that thou forsake not the Levite, as long as thou livest upon the Earth.* And again in the Verse immediately before my Text, *The Levite that is within thy Gates, Thou shalt not forsake him, for he hath no Part, nor Inheritance with thee.* A Reason, which is generally annexed to these Commands concerning the Levitical Portion; and which, being immediately repeated in the Text upon the mention of the Levite, shews us how it comes to pass that he is number'd with the

the Stranger, and Fatherless, and Widow; that is, with such Persons as had no certain Possessions.

The Stranger is the next that God recommends to their Care and Assistance. There were indeed among the Jews three sorts of People called by the Name of *Strangers*: All which, 'tis probable, are intended here. Any Person, who, not being of the Stock of *Abraham*, sojourned within their Gates, whether a Profelyte of Righteousness, or a Profelyte of the Gate, or an Alien, that is, a meer Gentile, driven unjustly from his own Country, or travelling upon his honest Occasions, who happen'd to fall into Distress, and Want, was to partake of this Triennial Distribution. And the Reason for this respect had to Strangers, tho' not produced on this Occasion, is yet frequently alledged in other parts of the Law, viz. that the Israelites themselves having been

Lev 19. 34. &
Deut. 10. 19.

B

Strangers

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Strangers in the Land of *Egypt*, should, from their own Experience of the Difficulties attending that Circumstance, learn to compassionate those, whose Lot it likewise was, to sojourn in a foreign Country. Remembring always, that They and their Fathers were once *themselves* in that Condition which they were commanded to pity.

The third sort of poor, recommended by name, as Persons deserving to be distinguished in the Number of the necessitous, are *the Fatherless and Widow*. Characters, which, without further Explanation, spread their Title to all Men's Compassion and Assistance. *Orphan and Widow* are words of such mournful Accent, that we find the ^a Sacred Writers borrow, and adopt them, in their Descriptions of any signal Distress, to compleat, and enliven their Images of Woe, and to draw the strongest lines in a Picture of Calamity.

And

^a Lam. 1. 1.
5. 3.
Isai. 47. 9.

And, as their Characters are made use of as means to excite and provoke Commiseration, so are their Persons constantly propounded to us in Scripture, as ordinarily the greatest Objects of our Charity.

^b *To do them Wrong* is represented as an instance of the grossest Injustice. ^b Exod. 22. 22.
Deut. 27. 19.
Psal. 94. 6.

^c *To defend and provide for them, to plead their Cause, and to establish their Border*, as the greatest Act of Mercy. Nor is the obligation to assist, and provide for such Persons founded upon any Reason that concern'd the Jews more than other People, (as in the two former Cases, where Reasons were given peculiar to the Jewish Nation) but hath its foundation in the Law of Nature; and is Universal and Perpetual, reaching to all Men and Ages: It is moreover *that Act* of Christian Charity which stands foremost upon the Roll; and to which we are obliged to have the first Respect, by the singular Preference that is given

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to it before any other Testimony of Social Kindness and Beneficence. For it is remarkable, that the Apostle Saint *James* ranges every Expression of Tenderneſs towards our Neighbour, under this head, viz. *Visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*. In which he plainly represents, and propounds, under *their Image and Figure*, All the Sons & Daughters of Affliction; and includes, and reports, *in their Distress*, all the Temporal Wants and Calamities of Mankind. And the Apostle might conclude, (and ſo may we,) that whoſoever can be deaf to the *Cries of the Orphan*, or turn away his Eyes, relentless, from *the Widow in her Tears*, would prove equally regardless of all other Appeals to his Humanity: Of an inexorable Nature; too ſtubborn to be wrought upon by any leſs powerful Motives, or ſofter'd for the Exercise of inferior and remoter Charities.

Orphan

Orphan and Widow stand distinguished, *as such*, by their Grief and Desolation: Unhappy Marks of Distinction. But when Grief and Desolation, which are their *common lot*, happen to be attended with a train of other trying Circumstances, such as Infirmities, Pain, or Poverty; when the *Orphan and the Widow* are not considered *in themselves* alone, but, as St. James hath put it, *in Afflictions*; Surrounded with Calamities of another Nature, and further distinguished by unusual Sufferings from the hand of Providence; Then their *Case* makes loud Demands upon us: They have a just and unalienable right to our first Regard and Assistance: And of all the various and numberless Subjects of this World's Misery, *They* claim the sad Precedence to our Pity and Relief.

Ah! methinks when I speak of *such*, 'tis impossible your Eyes should not be turned towards the
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Objects of this Annual Charity; *the distressed Families of deceased Clergy-men.* For whom, I would bespeak your Favour in these tender and affecting Terms ---- *The Widows and Fatherless in their Affliction* --- The Mourners, and the Helpless in want and distress. Such verily are They for whom we ask your Alms; and such ye would confess Them with relenting Hearts, had I the Skill fully to explain this Summary of Their misfortunes, which I give you in St. *James's* words. Words, which, if duly unfolded with a special view to Their circumstances, would be found to contain, and exhibit a long Catalogue of Necessities.

These, probably, have been often laid before you, at the yearly Returns of this Feast. Yet I have this Encouragement, that hitherto they have never been pleaded in vain. In truth *Theirs* is a Cause, that cannot have too many Advocates; and

I trust They will never want one here : One from amongst *Their Brethren*. For my own part, if I wish to be successful on this Occasion, 'tis for your sakes who are here assembled, as well as *theirs*, that I *must* wish it ; knowing that I cannot succeed in my Services for them, without being equally a Friend unto you all. For whatever Mercy and Kindness you shall shew them, upon a Principle of Christian Charity, will light at length upon your own Heads. *He that rewards the Bountiful, and repays the Lender*, will favour you, and prosper you, for all your kind Administrations to these helpless Members of your own Communion. But as this is an Argument that holds equally with respect to all Acts of Mercy, I forbear to prosecute it now ; and only beg you to keep it in your minds, whilst I throw into your view some Particulars, that distinguish the Objects of this Charity from

Prov. 22. 9.
19. 17.

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from all others that come in your way, or are recommended to your Assistance.

They are the Relicts, and the Offspring of Men, who, when alive, bore the nearest Relation to God, being appointed by him to wait at his Altar. What a peculiar Regard the Israelites were commanded to have for the Levite upon this account you have already heard. They were strictly charged *never to forsake him*, because he attended on God's Service: And may we not argue from the Rights of Ministers under the Law, to those under the Gospel? St. Paul doth so; and lays it down as a most equitable thing, that they *who sow unto you spiritual things should reap your carnal things*; and that *as they who waited at the Altar* (under the Mosaical Dispensation) *were Partakers with the Altar, even so they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.* And I should think, if there
be

1 Cor. 9.

v. 11.

v. 13.

v. 14.

be any thing in the Character of Christian Priests, which challenges a Respect, not otherwise due to their Persons, there *should* be something in their *poverty* too, which demands a Relief, not otherwise due to their Circumstances; being considered, not meerly as the *wants* of Men, but as the *wants* of God's Ministers. We are to do good, says Gal. 6. 10. the Apostle, *to all men, and especially to them who are of the household of Faith*: that is, to Believers, Disciples of Christ; If so, I may add yet further, *more especially* to those who are *the Stewards of this household*, the Pastors and Feeders of Christ's Flock. 1 Cor. 4. 1. If to administer to any of the little ones that believe in Christ, a Cup of cold Water only, Mat. 10. 42. in the name of a Disciple, shall not lose its reward; surely to do the same little and good Office to a Minister of Christ, in the name of a Minister, shall not fail of its Recompence; especially since our Lord

C hath

Mat. 10. 41.

hath assured us, *that whosoever receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's reward.* If he hath promised to look upon *what ye do unto one of*

Mat. 25. 40.

the least of his Brethren, by way of Charity, as done unto Himself; how much more will He look upon Himself as interested in whatever ye shall do, *for His name sake,* to those who in a higher sense *belong*

Mark 9. 41.

to him, and are, in a more peculiar manner, than other Christians, His Representatives on Earth: I say, when ye do it, on account of the Commission they bear from *Him,* and out of Reverence to the sacred Authority *He* hath invested them with.

But what is all this, you will say, to the Widows and Children of the Clergy? Yes, you shall hear. You have hardly any Opportunities (at least very few) of shewing your Respect to the Ministers of God, *by your Charity;* except it be in
your

your kind Succours to *Their* sinking households, when *They* fall. The Laws of the Land have provided, in great measure, that the Clergy shall not beg their Bread themselves; or be beholden purely to Mens Charity for their living; Or were no Human Laws enacted on this Part, yet *their* Divine Right of Maintenance would be their Security from a Dependence upon Customary Alms; and we trust a sufficient one too, notwithstanding the unwillingness of some at present to allow, and the readiness of others to defraud them of *that little*, which by the Establishment is secured unto them. They are usually Men too, that can bear patiently, if it be God's Will, with *ordinary wants*, and care not to solicit and trouble others on their own behalf. But then they sometimes leave those behind them (here it is you may discern and mark the Complaints of *Levi*)

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whose *wants are extraordinary and pressing*: who are under the hard Necessity of making their Case known, and publishing their Poverty to the World. Altho' therefore the Clergy are not Suitors for your Alms *themselves*, yet they leave their Representatives, their Wives, and their Little Ones to petition you, for the Husbands, and the Fathers sakes. If you think any thing is due to their Office and Character, and Services in Christ's Church, remember that all their right to your Favour is transferred to their mourning Families. Be kind to these, who were their Dependants, and have lost their Stay; for these are the Persons that stand in need of your Assistance, and come with the *Levites Claim, to partake of your Feasts, and of the Tithes of your Increase.*

The most remarkable, and with respect to other Families unusual circumstance, which generally multiplies

tiplies the Sorrows, and aggravates the Miseries of Orphanage and Widowhood, in the desolate household of a poor Clergyman, is this, that when the Members lose their Head, they lose their *All*: when the Good man drops, their only Support is gone: His Temporals, upon which they fed, are immediately alienated and sequestered; and they have no longer a Title to continue under that Roof where they've lived. They become worse than *Tenants at will*, who are only liable to be ejected at pleasure; for turn out *they must* to the wide World, and take up the Complaint of the Daughters of Zion ----

Remember what is come upon us, consider and behold ---- Our Inheritance is turned to Strangers, Our Houses to Aliens. We are Orphans and Fatherless ---- Poor Destitutes! at once deprived of their Protector, Master, Subsistence, and Dwelling. Henceforward they become, as it were,

Lam. 5.
1, 2, 3.

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were, *Strangers in the Land, having no part nor inheritance with their Brethren.*---- If therefore you admit them not to your *feasts*, and to *partake in the Tithes* of your *increase*, in the right of *the Levite*, behold them suing for the *strangers portion*! if they may be allowed that claim, from similitude of Circumstances, which too near a Relation to our selves would otherwise exclude them from the benefit of pleading. For they are not with us like the *strangers* among the *Jews*: They are of our *Brethren*; and the command of God concerning such was this: *If there be among you a poor man of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother.*

Deut. 15. 7.

You see in how many Capacities the Objects of this Charity stand intitled to your Succours; In that of *Brethren*, in that of *Levites*, in that of *Strangers*, and above all in
that

that of *the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*. Any one of these Characters was a sufficient Recommendation to the Favour of a *Jew*. Consider then how they, who come with all these claims together, ought to be regarded by *us Christians*.

But as I have hitherto spoken only to such their Circumstances as *shew their resemblance* of the persons named in the Text, it is time now to remark something further concerning them, and to do Justice to such their Merits, and such their Wants, as *distinguish them* in the great Crowd of indigent people, as Persons worthy to be preferred to your Charity.

They are the Relicts, and the Offspring of Those, who have spent all their time and study in the most serviceable way to mankind that is possible. I make use of this Argument for their Relief, because it is thought a good one in parallel cases. Where men have served their Country

try well, abroad or at home, by sea or by land, whether they perish in the service, or be disabled by it, or grow old in it, yet if their Families be reduced to Want, it is always thought reasonable that the Publick, which they served, should be charged with their necessities. There are Pensions and Hospitals for their Widows ; Their Merits, and their Services are pleaded for the Relieif of their Posterity. This is methinks exceeding right. And why it should not hold as good in the case of the Clergy, I know not; unless it be that *they* are not equally serviceable *in their way*: that *they* are not *deserving* of such Publick Encouragements as these : that *they*, tho' of all Men they undertake the most difficult and dangerous Work for the sake of their fellow Christians, sometimes ready to starve in their labours *themselves*, still that *they*, of all Men, ought not to be remember'd for *their Works Sake*.

Sake. If it be so, indeed my Argument is useless and insignificant. But if otherwise, (hear me patiently) If the Clergy of this Land *do deserve*, like other Benefactors to mankind, not to be forgotten when they die, I hope it is an Argument that may not be unseasonably urged for their poor Widows and Orphans.

To which I add another in their favour. They are Persons, who but lately have lived in some degree of Credit in these Counties; and partook in the Respects that their Husbands and Fathers Characters drew from the Neighbourhood. Their Reflections upon this make their Condition seem harder than otherwise it would have done, and quicken their Apprehensions of falling into Disgrace. Modesty, even in want, admonishes them to keep their distance, where before they had free Access. And when any of those Civilities which were

D paid

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paid them formerly for their dear Relations sake, begin to disappear, 'tis natural for them to suspect it is owing to the narrowness of their Circumstances, and that something worse than Poverty to ingenuous minds, *Contempt* is halting on.--- At least the Young Ones may be apt to think so, who not being yet acquainted with the Rules of Civility, or versed in the Arts of Dissimulation, interpret every Kindness that is shewed them on account of others, as done for their own sakes. For these Reasons, I say, the Coldness and Indifference, with which the Poor are generally received, is more sensible and afflicting to them than it would have been, had Fortune and Mankind never smiled upon them.

Again, They are the Remains of a Family, which, while it could support it self, was obliged to do it with more than ordinary Decency. Which makes their *Day of Affliction*

Affliction the more insupportable, through the affecting sense of the great Change that is wrought in their way of Life. The Good Man whose loss they mourn, thought himself bound, so long as he lived, to be a Pattern to others of Charity, and Hospitality, as far as his little Income would go, and so far as that went, his Family rejoiced with him: And had their eye perhaps more upon his Credit, than their own Interest; and spared nothing that was decent and becoming his station, while he dwelt among them, tho' they foresaw the Scarcity of Provisions, that their hospitality would leave at his Decease.--- This is a Consideration, that at the same time argues their Needs and their Deservings; and shews us that besides their common Claims to pity, they have an uncommon right to share in *such* Bounty and Liberality from others, as was formerly exercised amongst themselves.

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One thing more I must observe to you, that, in no other Christian Country in the World, do the Widows and Orphans of the Clergy stand in *such* need of a Publick Fund of Charity for their Releif, as do those of this Kingdom. The Church of *Rome*, you know, hath prevented all Complaints of this nature, by prohibiting her Clergy to marry: And in other Churches abroad, where their Marriages are allow'd of, better Provisions are made for them than in this Island. There being no Established Church in all Christendom, (I think I am not mistaken) in which there are so many mean Endowments of Parochial Cures, (in proportion to the whole number) and so scanty a Provision made *for their Supply*, as there is, this day, in the Church of England. How this comes to pass, is a Point I shall not meddle with, (I am sure 'tis not because ~~this~~ Church is the worst supplied
on

on the Clergy's part.) But thus much is worth your noting, that among the many Publick Charities, for which this Nation is remarkable, there is none more Extraordinary, (and I think it peculiar to this Kingdom too,) than the Incorporation of Clergy-men's Sons, in order to take some care of their poor Brethren, and in some measure by an After-Supply to help the Deficiencies of the Altar. Wonderful hath been the Success of this Undertaking, by God's Providence, ever since it was set on foot: Wonderful the Increase of the Fund *above*, these late Years: And great (and most welcome) is the Relief that issues annually from it, to the mourning Families of the House of *Levi*. I hope time will shew proportionable Success, and proportionable Fruits from *this Imitation* of that Glorious Work, for the Benefit of this Diocese.

And

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And so long as these Designs go on, and prosper, We are not concerned at the Objection of the Romanists to our Marriages, viz. That the Poverty of our Families make them a Burden to the Nation, and a disgrace to our Order: No, on the contrary, we say it is a Poverty, which tho' very afflicting to the Families of many Clergymen, and to be lamented for their sakes, redounds in the main to the Honour of our Order; so far are we from thinking it any discredit to the Ministry, to lay before you in this publick manner such circumstances, as are the real cause of this Application to you. Did the Wants, to which our Brethren so often leave their Families exposed, proceed from *their own* Luxury or Prodigality, while living; We should chuse rather to mourn their wretchedness in silence, than publish their Wants so unhappily occasioned. But, alas! They had nothing to be prodigal of;

of; If they could make the small Revenues of their Benefices serve the Necessities and Decency of their House, it was as much as they could do.---- Or had their Poverty been the effect of Mismanagement or Idleness, we then might be ashamed to appear as Advocates for them in this place. But you cannot but know this matter very well: That it is an unhappy circumstance, which, in this Kingdom, frequently attends one of the most laborious Employments in the World, *to obtain*, after all the pains that can be taken, and all the success that can be had in the business of the Calling; *very few Temporal Advantages*. It is the case (and truly a hard one) of many Good and Worthy Men, able and approved Ministers, who spend their whole lives in the Service of Religion, and to the great Benefit of Mankind, to be forced to travel on in a very low Condition *themselves*; and at length to leave their
Issue

2 Kings 2.

Issue (as Elijah, when taken up to Heaven, left Elishah) with nothing more than a *Garment* and a *Blessing*. Recommending them to the Providence of God, and Charity of their Neighbours. Had these Men been discouraged by the Difficulties that attend the Sacred Function; Had they preferr'd the satisfactions of this World, before those of doing good, tho' in a low station; Had they been engaged in secular Employments, and laid out their whole time and labour in following the Business and Interests of the World, then, probably, their *house of mourning* had not been so sad, as it is usually found. Had the Expences of a liberal and learned Education, to fit them for the Ministry, been poured into another Channel, and directed to the Attainment of Civil or Mechanick Knowledge, then, in all likelihood, had not their Wives been left, some of them old and infirm, and their Children, many
of

of them young and inexperienced, to struggle with the hardships of penury and want.

And now if this must be accounted a *dishonourable poverty*; Judge ye, my Brethren, where the *Dishonour* lies. But take this along with you, that, which way soever it reflects the shame, there is yet a prospect, that in process of time it will be wiped off, thro' the Extraordinary Liberality and Munificence of that ever Memorable and Blessed Princess, our late Sovereign, whose Affection and Bounty to the Clergy of this Land should never be forgotten, when we are speaking of their Circumstances. But till this Glorious Design of Hers hath taken full effect, It will become us, all of us, in our several Capacities, to be useful and assisting to the present Sufferers. How rare soever such Objects of Charity may be in times to come, yet *at present* they are numerous, and their Necessities are urgent.

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When I speak of assisting them *in our several Capacities, and according to our Abilities*, I am seasonably put in mind of the rule of Bounty laid down in my Text, *viz. Every man was to give according to his Increase to the persons specified.* Now if Arguments from the Consideration of Increase are proper to be urged any where, I presume they are in no place more proper, than in this *Seat of Trade and Plenty*: Where the Annual Increase must be considerable, and capable of worthily supporting such Acts of Piety as these; and which probably hath been a singular Inducement to the Designers of this Charity to keep their Feast within your Gates.

The Jews, you find, were obliged to bestow a certain fixed Proportion of the third year's Product; *The Tithes of their Increase*.---- I believe I may, without offence, retain the name of *Tithe*, when I speak of your Charity on this occasion, considering

sidering *the Persons for whom* it is collected. Tho' as to the proportion understood by it, I have no authority to require it, or determine any thing concerning it; *Christian Charity must not be bounded. Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a chearful giver.*--- There is indeed no reason to complain of your unwillingness to contribute your Assistance in this *labour of love*. The readiness you have hitherto shewn in this *Ministration to the Saints*, shews you deserve not to be so complain'd of. Yet permit me, without any reflection on your past kindness, to tell you, that there is yet abundant room for the display of your Bounty; that this Work is still capable of very great Improvements. May God put this good thing into your hearts, to advance it as fast as possible, that we may be able to behold

2 Cor. 9. 7.

in our own days, *many of our Brethren* rejoicing in the Effects of it.

You could not but take Notice of God's Promise to the Israelites in my Text, that in giving *the Tithes of their Increase to the Levite, the Stranger, the Fatherless, and Widow, He would bless them in all the Work of their hands.* And may we not say with Esau, *Hath our Father but one Blessing?* Is there not a Blessing reserved for us, *even us also*, if we forsake not the Levite, if we take in the Stranger, if we be fathers to the fatherless, and defend the cause of the Widow? May we not say with Job, *The Ear that hears us that shall bless us! The Eye that seeth us, shall give witness to us: because we delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish shall come upon us, and we have caused the Widows heart to sing for Joy?* A Blessing is all the Widow, the Orphan and the Stranger

Gen. 27. 38.

Psaln 68. 5.

Job 29. 11,
42. 13.

Stranger can return you for your mercy ; but if that be not sufficient you are intitled likewise (peculiarly in this Charity) to the *blessing of* Deut. 10. 8. 21. 5. *the Levite* ; a person *appointed to bless in the name of the Lord*. And what is above all, *and is all*, if we would speak properly, *God will bless you*, and prosper you in all that you put your hands unto ; at least you may depend on this, whatever Success he gives to your Affairs in this world, he will gloriously reward you in the next, and give you *Treasures in heaven* for your Mat. 6. 20. charitable Offices here.

I cannot conclude till I have added a word or two more, in a particular Address to You, my Brethren, Sons of the Clergy.— You, Sirs, are under peculiar Obligations to support the falling Branches of the house of Levi ; to search for the scatter'd remnants of your *Tribe, which are dispersed abroad, and driven from the Lot of their Inheritance.*
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They can boast, tho' in the lowest Ebbs of Fortune, and most joyless State, the same Relation to the Church and Priesthood that you do. The Orphans especially, who are descended from the Ministers of God. As therefore You must look upon them, as sharing equally with You in all the Advantages, and Honour that can redound to Children from the Dignity of their Parents Office, so they may reasonably *look upon You too*, as related, in some measure, to *their* unhappy Circumstances; and put in for some share of the Worldly Blessings that have attended the Sacred Character. Oh! let us who have been *blessed out of Sion, and*

Psal. 128. 6. *have seen Jerusalem in Prosperity all our life long*, look back to the house of our Fathers, and remember, that we owe our Success in the World (at least *most* of us do) to the Blessing of Heaven upon their Ministerial Labours, and to the Provisions

sions made for them from the Church. And we have *all of us* unquestionably received many Advantages & Encouragements, which were solely founded upon their Alliance to the Altar. We have Subsisted, we have been Educated out of those Revenues, which were dedicated and appropriated to the Service of God's House; and what Improvements soever we have made upon that stock and share of this World's Good, which Our Fathers have left us, may be looked upon as God's Blessing upon his own Portion and Inheritance. And what Returns so proper can we make in acknowledgment of such Mercies, as in relieving those who by Birth and Descent had as good a title as our selves to a competent maintenance and settlement in the World, but had not the happiness to be masters of the same Advantages.

It might have been the case of any of us, my Brethren, to have been Petitioners

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tioners for this Charity. *Our Fathers Lot might not have fallen in so fair a Ground.* God sends his Servants where he pleases. And he might have allotted our Fathers a Place among the suffering part of his Ministers. *Then* had their Poverty afflicted *us*, and perhaps, our best claim to other mens compassion, had been the Character of their Piety and Goodness.

Let us not therefore be ashamed to own these for *our Brethren*. Yea rather, let us acknowledge our sense of Relation, by shewing *a more than ordinary Kindness for them*. Charity and Beneficence should be with us Domestick Vertues. We should seem degenerate Sons: We should seem little to have profited by the good Instructions, and good Examples of our Fathers, were we not ready to lead the way in every Charitable Work.

Finally,

Finally, My Brethren, endeavour in all things to demean your selves worthy of so near a Relation to the Ministers of Christ ; And live answerably to the advantages you have received in your Education. You must *add Vertue to your Charity*. This indeed is the main point. *If the root be holy, says the Apostle, the branches also are holy.* Some-Rom. xi. 16. thing there is in your Extraction that demands a more Exemplary Holiness in your lives ; And tho' many of You do not follow the profession and studies of your Parents, but are engaged in secular Cares and Employments, and are unavoidably led by Your Civil Vocations into a way of Life, which Your Fathers knew not, yet remember, that you are still of the Household, still of the Retinue of those, who are immediately consecrated to Religious Offices ; and should, in consideration of that circumstance, endeavour, by the

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purity of Your Conversations, to shew all men what Tribe and Lineage You are of.

Jude 12.

At this time especially, when you are met together *as Sons of Clergymen*, be careful, that there *be no spots in this your feast of Charity*.

That no handle be given to any adversary that may lie in wait to calumniate these our Meetings, either to reproach us for our Parsimony, or Intemperance, as if we understood not *the design of assembling our selves together* : But let all our things according to St. Pauls rule, *be done*

1 Cor. 16. 14.

with Charity : That whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we

Ib. 10. v. 31.

may do all to the Glory of God. Thus we shall pay the due honours to the present Solemnity, and rightly answer the Ends intended in its Institution, by making it a happy and fortunate juncture to our poor Relations, and using it as a reasonable occasion of innocent rejoicing our selves. A Day of Blessing to us both. Let

Let us then carry our hearts duly
season'd with Christian Love from
the House of God, to the House of
Banqueting. This prior Invitation
into the Courts of the Most High,
to partake in a more refined and
Heavenly Entertainment, and join
in Anthems of Praise unto our
Maker, is designed to sanctify and
soften our dispositions, before we
sit down to the ensuing Feast of
Love. Not as a Prelude to usher
in *a meer* Sensual Repast, but as a
due preparative to our true Chri-
stian Sacrifice of doing good, and
distributing to the poor, wherewith,
we are assured, God is well pleased,
and *that* our Souls being filled with
a grateful sense of Gods goodness
and bounty to us, at the same time
that our bodies are refreshed with
His Creatures, we may *open our
hands wide unto our Brethren*, and
in a Gospel sense, give *Meat unto the
hungry, and Drink to the Thirsty* :
And thereby dispose our Heaven-
ly

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ly Father to shower down more Blessings upon our heads, than by our Prayers we can obtain, or can deserve by all our other Services.

O Lord who hath taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing worth, &c.



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